

RABL ROUSER

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RABL EXPOSED!

Personal Politics Issue

Finally I reach this page. It took a lot to get here. I had to once again move toward and through those murky and heavy memories; full of silent rage and empty hope. I had to go back to that spring day back when I was twelve. I had been out playing football with the neighborhood boys. I was tired and dirty, but I felt satisfaction from knowing I was the best blocker. My body felt well worked and strong.

It was dark when I walked into the house to find my older sister and her friends readying themselves for the evening. I can still feel their shame-filled stare that left me scrambling to hold on

to my feeling of completeness from the day. The turned-down corners of their painted mouths spoke to me of my flimsy self-worth. Professing my best interests, they began telling me the terms and conditions of entering womanhood. I heard them say that I'd be pretty and attractive if only I... brushed my hair, cut my nails, washed my face, didn't smell like sweat, and above all if I lost weight. I'd be accepted and loved, I heard them say, if I wasn't so fat. I'd be happier and have boyfriends if I didn't eat so much.

Rage churned in my stomach and as I turned to run I saw the look of disappointment on my sister's face. "What do you think you are, better than everybody else?" was the last thing I heard.

Confused and hurt by the mixed messages, I left. They were telling me how to belong -- and I hadn't realized I didn't already. They were saying that I wasn't okay and that I was to blame. The fear of

being the unchosen left me no other choice, I felt, than to be in collusion with them about the distorted meaning of satisfaction and contentment. Defining themselves and deriving value by how sexy they were as viewed by male standards, yet never touching their own sexuality and never feeling comfortable, left me feeling

wronged. I felt that I must believe these illusions of protection. I felt I must also erase my natural body functions and smells with prepackaged purchases of dangerous chemicals that smelled of flowers. I wanted to belong.

I headed for the kitchen, too close to the pain and smoldering anger. I settled into a cheese sandwich, eating to muffle my screaming rage at being denied my body and rendered invisible. I sat there unable to understand how my own sister shamed me into not expecting too much -- from myself and from the culture. My own sister shamed me into believing that it was wrong to enjoy the difference and uniqueness of my individual body. Shamed me into believing that being powerful was wrong.

I know now that my sister is not to blame. She was motivated by love in trying to protect me and spare me the lessons she had had to learn. She wanted me to survive. It still hurts, though, and excavating these honesties makes me hurt deep down. But I know I am not alone. I also know that privilege tempers these wounds. Far too often I have heard women tell their stories of pain and self-destruction, just trying to survive in this woman-hating culture. Women who, trying to find some way to control access to their bodies, and trying to avoid acknowledging the gap between their lived realities and those manufactured and legitimated on television or in glamour magazines, found a way to cope -- by having control over what did or didn't go into their mouths.

We were searching for a way to quiet the quaking rage and denied sexuality so we compulsively eat to numb ourselves; never eat at all and starve ourselves; or eat and purge ourselves to stay silent. At the same time trying to identify and name the fear of battling an articulated power that is not on our terms and is not of our creation. If we accept our powerlessness, then our anger will destroy us. Yet if we see that anger as informative and energizing, we can protect ourselves.

Kids Say The Darnedest Things

By Ned Day

"I'd like to take those kids over my knee and give them a good spanking." The speaker was a prominent Twin Cities peace and justice activist, known for taking a firm stand against sexism, racism, homophobia and class-bias within the movement. The kids were youth who dared to question the appropriateness of a stump speech by a politician at an anti-rape demonstration. The utterly unremarkable nature of this comment says a great deal about how widely

We need to take a healthy position against the hegemony and its entrenched values and create radical alternatives to the assumptions that underlie our lives. We need to live fully in our bodies and find our sources of strength. We need to unearth all those shame-based messages about our inadequateness and incompleteness so we do not replicate those same constraining patterns. I know what it is to be lied to, and I know how important it is not to lie to myself. Learning to not lie about my anger saved me, and continues to. Learning to identify the lies I am told about my body, and realizing that this culture fears the strength of my connections, I gain power. Refusing to settle for being looked at but not seen, I am learning to see my body as strong and one deserving of attention . . . from me and from others who are willing to see its plump perfection. There just is no telling what a satisfied woman might do.

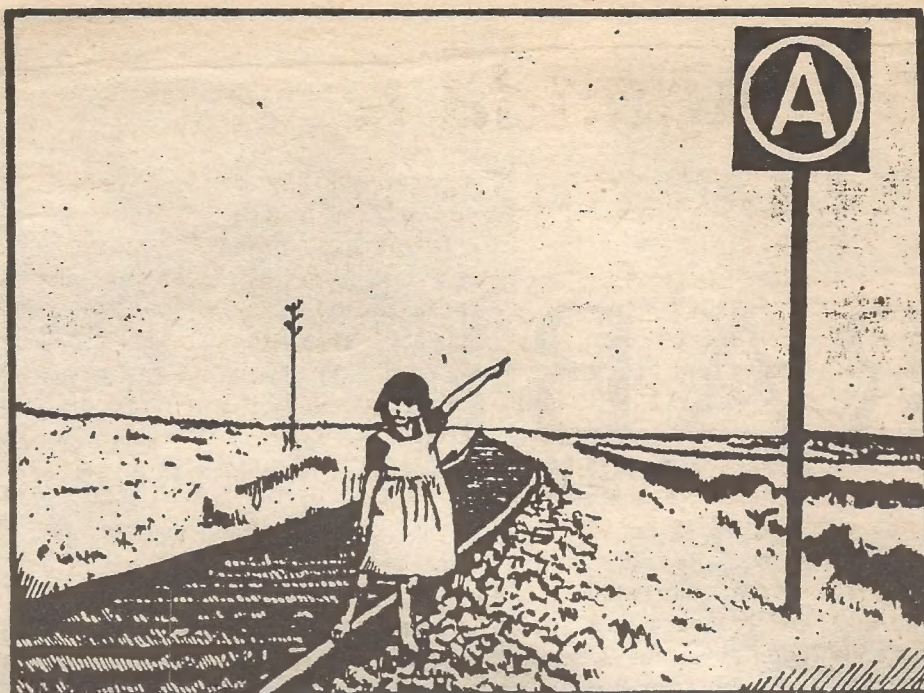


accepted violence against children is in this society.

The struggle against ageism within the movement only touches on the systemic abuse of children and youth. We can complain all we want about how youth are silenced in the movement, about how they are treated like worker ants by older activists. But we need to go deeper to the roots of the problem in larger society.

The Nature of the Oppression of Children and Youth

An infant girl is raped by a



member of her family. A crying 9 month old is ignored and described as "manipulative" by workers in a children's shelter. A child just learning to speak is told to "shut up." A 3 year-old is made to sit in her own urine after she wets her pants in school. An eviction notice forces a 4 year-old onto the street in November. A kindergarten class learns to raise their hands to go to the bathroom, to walk in line behind their teacher, to not touch themselves. And everywhere kids are taken across the knee of some adult and battered.

Humiliation, violence and other abuses directed at children are not isolate events. They have social causes, they fulfill social functions and they are part of a whole system of oppressive institutions. The atomized (or nuclear) family is inherently dysfunctional. One or two adults rarely have the collective skills, energy and patience necessary to meet the most basic emotional needs of a child. Child care workers are overworked and underpaid and expected to carry out the authoritarian socialization of the kids.

Compulsory schooling frequently fails to teach people to read, but succeeds at training them to follow orders, get to work on time and not to question why. For 12 years of their lives kids are confined in schools controlled by the state (or the church) a fed a steady diet of lies, rote repetition, 5 minute bells and arbitrary rules. By graduation the creative, playful and inquisitive impulses of the child have been crushed in almost everyone. The properly socialized young adult is ready for 50 years of the 9 to 5 grind, an abusive marriage, maybe a stint in the imperial army and of course, to raise children of her own.

Oppressed people do not spring into the world at the age of 18. They are socially constructed from birth. While the oppression of children and youth involves different methods according to the class, nationality (race), and sex of the children, there remain certain constants. We know that incest and other forms of child abuse cross all social divisions. While the situation is much more aggravated by economic and other pressures in oppressed communities, almost all families are in important respects dysfunctional. There are wide differences in the quality of education available to different children, but the quality of schooling is distressingly the same for all but the very most privileged, who after all, must be trained to give orders.

The essence of the oppression of children is that they are treated as if they were not ends in themselves, but rather the means to someone else's ends. The parent who wants his

child to fulfill his own failed ambitions, the school administrator whose career is built on suppressing the chaos of the real pursuit of knowledge, the military recruiter who must fill a quota of young bodies: all treat the child as an object. This pattern is not limited to those who already hold power. The energies and passions of youth are channeled into the national liberation army, the "revolutionary" political party or the trade union with the same cynicism as they are channeled into the national guard, the ruling party or factory management. While youth around the world are fighting in the streets, the demand for the liberation of youth is nothing but a faint whisper.

Where There is Oppression

"My eyes have seen the glory
of the burning of the school
we have tortured every teacher we
have broken every rule
we march to the office
to string up the Principal
and the kids go marching on

Glory, glory hallelujah
Teacher hit me with a ruler
I hid behind the door
with a loaded .44
And now the teacher
ain't a teacher no more."

-- from a popular
song of school children's resistance.

The liberation of children and youth is complicated by the very limited means they have to fight with. The principle that the emancipation of the oppressed must be the work of the oppressed themselves is still important, as a starting point. Any meaningful support for children's liberation needs to start with solidarity with children's resistance as it already exists. This means two things. First, understanding how the oppression of other groups can not truly be overthrown and the oppression of children left intact and therefore why the demands of children's liberation must be taken up widely by other movements. Second, understanding how children's resistance manifests itself.

Two year olds frequently use the word "no" more than any other word. Grown ups treat this alternately as charming or annoying. Nobody takes seriously the right of the toddler to give or deny consent, to have preferences that are important. By the time a kid gets to kindergarten she joins what is rarely

Propaganda & Dehumanization

By Tiziano Fontanive

A derogatory image of wimmyn guilty of somehow betraying the society by not obeying its laws or mores, through oppressive nationalism - viewing your group (country) as being superior and thus the others inferior (human and subhuman), or racial or sexual differences.

Society must establish a double standard with regard to its view of the value of life. People cannot simply just kill each other within the group (assuming that each person in the group is regarded as an equal in value) or else the society will completely break down. Those people who are regarded as equal are thought of as "humans", and the most basic facet of human organization is that one human does not kill another. So when for one reason or another it becomes desirable to kill other persons they must be "dehumanized" or made subhuman, thus not as important and therefore subject to different norms of behavior.

This is done in many ways: calling the person a "criminal", punishment (the state is always

It all comes down to how one group, whether it is segregated by sex, race, class, age, or ethnic background, relates to another group that differs in some way. Religion often provides the excuse for dehumanization because of the "infallibility" of the deity and its priests (not questioning their orders) and the closed minded fanaticism (not listening to other ideas) which tends to accompany it.

All personal crimes (murder, rape, assault) within a peer group must be regarded as wrong in order to preserve the group identity. They can only occur when the act is renamed, ie; as self-defense, capital punishment (the state is always



right), or attacking "not - we"

(Aa) kills (Ab) = this must be regarded as wrong, because both are peers (A's). Some form of justice must occur, usually in the form of some sort of communal retaliation.

(Aa) kills (Ba) = This may be regarded as wrong, but it is a lesser crime because (Bb) is not part of the group and thus not equal and deserving of the same treatment.

Now of course, dehumanization doesn't just apply to killing, nor does it simply apply to groups as a whole. It's a basic human reaction which often needs to be reinforced by society, a coping method for dealing with activities which cause a negative emotional reaction. Whether it's the cop viewing demonstrators as "commie - trash" so that he can beat the shit out of them, or the soldier viewing the enemy as "gooks" so that he can torture and kill them, or the man viewing a womyn as a "slut or cunt" so that he can rape her. In the process of dehumanization the norms

produces hatred of women and allows for torture of women. This cannot continue, but it does. The weapon remains caressed by women and their bodies. For a woman, heterosexual sexuality in a patriarchy creates difficult contradictions. I can say all of this and still think kindly of a man I have a crush on.

Of course this man, and many others, want to get as far away from that gross sexuality as I do. Smart cookies. So these are the boys I sleep with, if you gotta sleep with boys.

And I think I gotta sleep with a few more boys.

The first revolution I was part of, was a curious product of oppression. I am of course referring to the much-touted sexual revolution. A revolution which allowed the oppressed to be even more available to the oppressor. I offered myself up in the name of being cool and rebellious, thinking all along my choices were my own. I feel a sting now when I realize my choices were dictated by social pressure, than by self-loving decisions. Rebelling against the sexual constraints upon women held an element of personal liberation as did being at odds with society, by in a patriarchy, men use and everything else gets used. (Women, children, animals, the earth, men by other men.) Despite the absence of real revolutionary progress, it wasn't all bad. I did learn that sexuality could be divorced from negative hype and guilt and be enjoyed. Amidst the much-touted drugs, sex and rock 'n'

of behavior that the victimizer expects to be treated with are different from those used on the victim.

This is where the media becomes so important in shaping men's views about wimmyn and wimmyn's views about themselves. In order for a man to rape a womyn he must view her as inferior and himself superior so that he will feel no guilt or remorse. And all you have to do is turn on the T.V., go to a movie, or look in a magazine to see these dehumanizing images -- they are all around. Whether it's in an overt form, such as men joking about rape or hard-core bondage pornography, or in a more subtle form, like soft-core porn; *Playboy* and *Penthouse* type stuff, movies, music videos, and advertisements. All present an image to the man that wimmyn are sex objects and are somehow just not equal to men.

The second form must focus on the womyn herself, in order to make her feel inferior or subhuman. This is also done through the media, in ads especially. That a womyn must judge her own self-worth by how she is perceived by men, she must wear the "correct clothing", perfume, and of course be the proper (and very unnatural) size and weight to be considered human. All are designed to keep the womyn's view of herself low and dependant upon external crap.

All of this is to keep wimmyn powerless; the first and most important strength must come from within, from your own self-worth and confidence, and if your self-worth is shitty, then you are effectively powerless.

roll tendencies there was a lot of good fun and good friends and experimental sexuality, some with strangers and some with dear lovers. It took a long time to learn to say "no" when I wanted to. Some women never have that luxury.

Part of being a lesbian was getting to tell men: "No, I'm a lesbian" and hoping (maybe) that they'd leave me alone. I finally had to be more honest and say "no," without excuses. So I guess I learned to say "no" in that pseudo-revolution. I also found out that I could pursue relationships, not passively wait to be pursued. I wonder if it's still going on -- the sexual revolution. Somehow I was lucky and never got beaten up or raped... Although rape is often a thin line.

So how can I sleep with men? It has entirely to do with the man. I wondered, for years now, if men and women can ever *really* get along. I see that it takes a high level of communication, plus I see better chances with a man who was raised to be non-sexist. Beware of those self-proclaimed male feminists who either see embracing feminism as a ticket to involvement with a stong women, or who are filled with self-loathing for being a male. Just like most men, both will suck women dry and will never actively fight with other men against sexism.

Transforming patriarchy is constant process absolutely necessary to the survival of people and the earth. New ways of being in relationships, both non-sexual and sexual, are a must. Acknowledging and neutralizing any power imbalances that exist between people is basic to shifting from power-based manipulation to egalitarian and mutual

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Confessions of a Lesbian

By Dolly Warrin

It was a steamy night... Oh, don't you wish I'd go on.

Confessions of a lesbian. Lesbians are really cool people, that's why it's so hard to call myself bisexual, even if I am. I believe bisexuality can be personally liberating, as can sexuality generally, if the relationships are clear and free of power imbalances. but two more pluses for lesbians come to mind: It's really usually nicer to make love with women than with men -and- lesbians are the ultimate threat to the patriarchy. Two big pluses, I'd say. But there were so many rules to follow. I guess that's what keeps groups separatist. Rules and parameters come to form group boundaries while internal support, encouragement, and pressure sustain those boundaries.

I intentionally used lesbian and separatist interchangeably. Society doesn't generally support same-sex lifestyles so there is a tendency to gravitate toward an existence that is separate from the homophobic society. For lesbians and gay men, socialising often remains separatist since work usually catapults one into the big middle of homophobic society with all it's enforcers.

Men -- how can I sleep with them? That's the big question in the minds of all the lesbian onlookers. It is a good question. I have asked it myself many times. of myself and about other girls gone astray...

So how can I sleep with men? Well I am attracted to just a very few of them. To tell you the truth there are not that many to choose from. Most guys are pigs. It's a shame, but it's true. We are, after all, conditioned by a patriarchy. And that means men on top from the word go. people on top usually need to be pushed off so the ones underneath can breathe and live. It's just like any other liberation struggle. Somehow it's often easier for political men to

comprehend and support just about any other liberation struggle except women's liberation. Could it be because as women we are trying to liberate ourselves from men and perhaps those very "political" men? This is not a rhetorical question. It's

a question with an answer. the choices are:

- Yes.
- Yes, of course.
- Yes, of course that makes sense.

Men, how can I sleep with them? With detachment is one way. That's how a lot of wives and prostitutes and lovers do it, for duty, money and barter. There are countless reasons that women have learned to detach while being sexual with men. Some are incest and rape experiences or boredom. . . Oh, there must be other reasons. . . I did say countless. Well, worse than boredom is no fulfillment for the woman, often coupled with inadequate communication skills on everybody's part. This means the man gets off and the woman detaches and the man doesn't notice he's just fucked again.

You know, it seems that lots of men must be sacrificed with just fucking something or someone, to notice whether the other person even enjoyed it or not. Now, don't jump in and start defending yourself or defending men. Just face the fact that detachment, for many reasons, is a reality for many, many women. But I am trying not to sleep with men I have to detach from. "Why would you?" you ask. "Bad habit," I'd answer.

So how can I sleep with men? With guilt, for participating in something with men that is often used against women, often brutally. When I worked actively against pornography, I certainly thought I could never be sexual with a man again. Porn is filled with penis envy and penis worship and very much encourages disgust for women, which

Shirley Shoots the Shit

By Shirley Garms

So I was riding down the street on my bike, having a real good time because it's warm and there are all kinds of beautiful nature things growing all over the place. Then in the midst of my daydream I hear, "Nice green hair ya cunt." Well, this comment got my blood going pretty fucking fast and I wished I had something to throw at the fascist who yelled it. I had barely finished formulating these thoughts of violent revenge when I hear another shout from behind: "Hey, baby, nice legs." Well, these two comments seem different and then again they seem the same. One is obviously derogatory and the other is obviously derogatory and sometimes mistaken for a compliment. I used to have some friends who said they enjoyed getting yells, honks and miscellaneous comments from strange obnoxious men. I guess I can't speak for all womyn, so I won't. I hate being the subject of everyone's visual interrogation. Because I am a woman strangers think that they have the right to comment on my looks. Because I look different from a lot of people I get a lot more shit than "normal"-looking womyn

So I'm riding down the street

and these thoughts about fucked-up society start to enter my head. How come those friends of mine like being yelled at? Well, womyn are taught a whole bunch of stuff that's pretty fucked. We are taught that womyn are on display. We are taught to judge ourselves and others on our looks, and that whoever looks the best is the best person. We are taught that looking best is only possible if we shave off our body hair

anyway, because womyn always mean yes when they say no. Even if you yell "FUCK YOU ASSHOLE" and look around for something to throw, you really want his expert opinion on your appearance. This is a proven fact. There are several reasons why this is true. One is that your eyesight is not as good as men's, so when you look in the mirror you can't get as good of an idea from it as a man can from looking at you. Another

and cover our faces with makeup and spend hours spraying the hair on our heads in a certain predetermined fashion and cover our fingernails with shellac and buy all the latest fashions and try to please men because otherwise you probably will never get a man and you aren't a real person without a man. So when strange men whistle or honk or yell they are really giving you a compliment and you should giggle and smile and accept it properly. Even if you don't give the proper response, the man will know you appreciated it

is that womyn are just a little stupid. And last and most importantly womyn know that they are nothing without men. Even when men yell at you, even when men scorn you, even when men beat you.

So I got a little sarcastic riding on my way home. I don't really know what to do when men yell stuff at me. I used to yell back and sometimes I ignore it, but neither of these options has satisfied me. So tomorrow I'm going to find a squirt gun and fill it with ink, preferably permanent, and carry it with me wherever I go.



You Have Cancer

By Lou Bellisimo

Cancer. So why is it that so many people I know have it? Why is it that almost every month new information comes out that some product, maybe a spray used on fruits or vegetables, such as alar (daminozide) or some kind of food, such as carp and other fish from the great lakes which contain dangerous amounts of T.C.D.D., a cancer causing substance, or even clothes, such as children's clothes made with tris, a flameretardent chemical which causes cancer.

Where does this concern come from, well it's probably safe to say that all industrialized nations spend billions of dollars creating it. They vomit it into the ocean, spew it into the air and cover the food that we eat with it. They then spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to cure this incurable problem. The money employs a lot of white coated men who spend a lot of their time torturing small animals trying to infect them with cancer, write meaningless papers about it and win a few nobel prizes.

The money also goes to organizations like the Amerikkkan Cancer Society who does more to cause cancer by brainwashing the public into thinking that cancer isn't a problem, that it's easily cured with enough money and time.

Fifty years ago one in forty people died of cancer, twenty-five years ago it was one in thirty, fifteen years ago it was one in ten, today it's one in four. soon everybody will have cancer of one form or another. How did things get so bad? One reason is apathy, people think that cancer and the environment doesn't have anything to do with them, well it does.

T.C.D.D., a cancer causing agent can be found in the fatty tissue of most Americans at the rate of 7.2 parts pre trillion. This fact makes it very difficult to study cancer causing substances; as there is no one who does not have diöxin in their body, this means there can be no control group to study the effect that a certain substance has on one exposed group comparec to an unexposed group since we all have been exposed. One ounce of dioxin if consumed in equal amounts is sufficient to kill a million people, a drop could kill a thousand, and it's one hundred thousand times to a million times more potent than thalidamine in causing birth defects.

The government of the U.S.A., like most governments does not care if you die of cancer. The chemical companies who make the poisons don't care if you give birth to something resembling hamburger due to your being exposed to one of their chemicals, do you care?

So what's the cure? Well, cancer, due to modern medicine, can be cured in some cases, but it's not really curing, it's more of temporarily elevation. The cancer is cut out or attacked with radiation. The cure is prevention, stop the flow of filth into the ocean and the air. Stop eating filth and start caring about ourselves and our children. We must start caring about the earth. The earth, like ourselves is also dying of cancer, and if nothing is changed, we will both slowly die.



THE WORLD IS DYING SLOWLY, BUT PEOPLE ARE DYING FASTER. AT THE HANDS OF POLITICIANS, ARMIES. CORPORATIONS, POLICE, AND BLIND PATRIOTIC GREED. YET THE GENERAL POPULACE FEEL THE SYSTEM IS WORKING...AT WHAT?

Three Days Behind Bars

From the first moment the cop car showed up, we realized we were in for a lot of hassle. The strong arm of the law was going to put its big foot in and put an end to our freedom in the name of justice. We were thrown around and pinched, handcuffed and shoved into the back of a car.

After the usual questions of who you are and where you live, they took us downtown. We handed over to the Sheriff's Department. The painful handcuffs that were cutting into our wrists were removed. From there on, the physical brutality was over and the boredom and mental stress began. We were stripped of all our personal possessions. All those things that give you your personal contact with anything other than the state were removed, and we became conformed and uniformed. After the strip search we were given ugly blue clothes that didn't fit, made by those two famous seamstresses: Pollie and Ester.

We were then put into a holding cell where we sat for about an hour with several other people - some drunk, some mad, some asleep. In turn, we were called out to have our mug shot taken. Here's a good time to tryout some of those impersonations you've been working on. Then more information was taken, fingerprints taken and patience tanken. Then after all that you get one phone call, they dial it for you from another room, and record what you say.

We were then put into our cell which is a large room with about twenty people and twelve cots. Everything is bolted down and made of steel. The atmosphere was cold and sterile. The cots are about as comfortable as the rest of the experience.

You're given a small flat pillow, made of something similar to what they make bumpers out of, a sheet and a 4' by 4' super-static blanket made of something resembling asbestos.

Fluorescent lights illuminate the room. The windows are dark and mesh covers them from both sides, making it impossible to see out of. There are no clocks in the room, so keeping track of time is done by watching TV. The days are broken up only by the rude intrusion of the state, who insists on counting everyone, as if anyone could get out.

The only thing you eventually look forward to, are the meals. The food for the most part is awful, unwholesome and very ugly. If you don't eat meat you are going to be hungry, if you don't drink milk or eat cheese you are really out of luck, and there are no substitutions. And remember you are still innocent until proven guilty.

Most of the guards, of course, are jerks. Yet some are different from what one would expect. Many got their jobs straight out of High School because their Dad knew someone. Many hate their jobs, yet can't afford to quit. They are in a trap of down payments and children which prevent them from opting to occupations which benefit society. Our guard had a PhD in Eastern philosophy, yet spends one third of his day watching a door and making sure people clean up after meals. Another guard's younger brother was in the jail of which he worked. Though he was his only family in town, they are prevented from communicating. Unfortunately, we live in a world where there are plenty of people wearing price tags.

After meal your eating utensil, a plastic spoon, must be returned with your plastic tray, if there is a single spoon missing, the pigs get really pissed (for what reason I don't know, they obviously

By Lou Bellissimo and Dick Weber

are unconcerned about recycling).

First the TV, which is mounted on the wall is turned off (a relief for some) then the pigs demand that the missing spoon be returned. Then someone reluctantly digs through the trash to retrieve the spoon before they shake down the whole building and strip search everyone.

Life in jail is about control. They have all the information, you do not. They can come and go, you cannot. They can make a phone call, you cannot.

In turn, most of the people in the cell are called upon to either see a judge or be released. Once again you wait: You wait until they are ready to let you go.

If you happen to be one of the unfortunate people whose clothes somehow tie you to you to your supposed crime, then there is a good chance they're going to keep your clothes. This means you get to leave in hand outs from the Salvation Army, and just like the jail clothes, they don't fit and they're ugly.

Being incarcerated by the state not only is a drag for those in the clutches of the state, but for loved ones and friends the experience is no joy either. The Sheriff's Department seem to take great joy in insulting people trying to find out what's happened to those in custody. They give you wrong information, they're rude, and they treat you like scum. Imagine the frustration of not knowing when your lover, or maybe a close friend, is going to be released, or what they, the state, are doing to them.

There are many subtleties of jail life that we have failed to mention. To sum things up, jail is hell. Avoid it at all costs. Leave no traces, always wear gloves. Be sure to throw the gloves away after each significant action, burn them if possible. Make no written notes of actions, speak to no one about what you intend to do, or have done. This holds true when you are in jail. They will interrogate you even in so-called friendly conversation, even if they swear it is all off the record, say nothing.

Check the area out around your target, look for parked cop cars, unmarked ones also, neighborhood watch, etc. Trust your feelings and those of the people you're with. If one person doesn't want to do their action, then you all don't. Never, never rush into an action - there will always be another chance - don't be tempted. Stay free.



Cont. from P.3

interactions.

Alongside present and future explorations of relationships lies the past with all its memories and impact. Daily I am reminded of my own sexist conditioning that reaches to and from my core. We all need to heal. Generally women need to heal from victimization by individual men and from our role as tools and servants of patriarchal society. Men need to heal both as victims of patriarchal/sexist conditioning (which is usually more apparent in their childhood) and as oppressors. Deliberately relinquishing their birthright and actively seeking equality by countering sexism in their own lives and in society seem like solid steps toward healing for men.

We all need to heal. Healing has nothing to do with guilt and everything to do with self-acceptance. Healing is progressively rebuilding a whole self, finding lost or stolen parts of our selves and loving our ability to change for the better.

I first had to begin to heal in separation from men with only women in my life. I later found I could have (some) men in my life as friends -- non-sexual friendships that were healing because of their non-sexual nature.

More recently I'm finding ways to heal sexually with men, so another part of how I can sleep with men has to do with healing. Making love can be such a joy and something perhaps to share with special friends. In this current political movement, women and men are becoming friends in new ways -- both non-sexual and sexual -- and that is promising.

So how can I sleep with men? With some hope. Hope that if women and men are going to continue to be in relationships and be sexual, that new kinds of relationships based on equality and true respect can develop.

This hope, though, is based in reality. A reality that never forgets for a second that patriarchy dominates globally and will continue to dominate globally, until each of us is unwilling to allow a system of subjugation to exist. This system created each of us, and only we can tear it down. Start now.



Making The Choice



By Jennifer Jones

Finally after four weeks of wanting to write but not being able to, I've discovered why. Abortion is a hot topic now, both in the mainstream media and within the peace movement, but no one talks about having one. At rallies & demonstrations there is usually a woman who will share her experience which is often especially dramatic, such as rape or incest. But a great number of the women who choose to have abortions were not forced into sexual relations. Where are those women? Admittedly it is a very personal decision, one which can only be made by the individual involved but why don't they talk about it? Because of a feeling of shame.

I know that I made the right decision for myself and the child which would have been. In my mind and in my heart, I accept that. Nonetheless I've kept my abortion a secret. I have told a selected few but the majority of my friends know nothing of it. Sometimes I want to

tell them but I don't know how to bring the subject up. Then I feel awkward because it happened so long ago. Those friends with whom I have shared my experience were all supportive at the time but since then have never brought it up. No one knows what to say or how to react since nobody ever talks about it. This silent void also made it easier for me to ignore and repress my own feelings. There is this perception that it always happens to someone else. The mysterious "them" that no one knows. But it doesn't. Lots of women become pregnant unintentionally.

Why the silence? It stems from the patriarchal society, whose image of women is so fucked up. A woman by definition it seems, should fit their predetermined concepts which include maternal nonsexual images of mothers.

Women should be physically attractive and traditionally feminine,

their sexuality repressed and hidden except in the bedroom if she is married. To say that I have had an abortion also states that I have broken several of society's biggest taboos. First it is blatant evidence of my sexuality, and as an unmarried woman, obviously I'm not a virgin. This must mean that I am a whore. As if that is not enough - I got pregnant, which according to part of society is all my fault - I deserved it. Then to top it off instead of being a martyr and sacrificing my life and goals to raise an unwanted child, I selfishly decided to have an abortion. Or I didn't carry my baby to full term and let it be adopted by a white rich capitalist family who refuse to adopt any minority babies.

To tell you the truth being pregnant isn't much fun. It affects all aspects of your life and relationships. The emotional trauma and physical pain and sickness is really miserable. The only time a woman should go through

Cont. on P.9

"They can dream about a new world and a new
impleme



order. But if they try to
at it they are going to jail."

--Bob Lutz, Minneapolis Deputy
Chief of Police about RABL after the
June 1988 *Bash the Rich*
demonstration. (From *City Pages*,
June 15, 1988. P. 2.)



me and diane out havin a smoke
on the street i once lived in
played in & was a child in
i look at the children older than b4

alison is tall, talkative, melissa
is seven yrs old & missing teeth
they seem like babies to me.

holding terry's newborn & seeing
these people
every afternoon last year
year b4

& holding terry's newborn makes
them
seem like babies

heather is crying
alone in the snow
& everyone has gone 4 a while
but she & i
she looks around
& me trying to be cool
to her & ask
"what?"

in the existentialist tone
i assume
i want to offer some kind
of solace

but she hides from me

me
standing on the porch next door
25 feet away

when i was four
i felt repelled by grownups
in an odd dichotomy-
but i am post - pubescent
is that what scares children?

i dunno but
my haircut prob'ly freaks her out

& when i imagined
trying to tell her
that i'm ok...
or give any decent explanation
of how come i have a shaved head &
nobody else does
i realized i'd have to cue her in on all
the horrors
of this life...
& how would that make her feel
& would she know a damn thing
about what i was saying
because grownups used to try that on
me & all i got
was the feeling of despair &
condescension

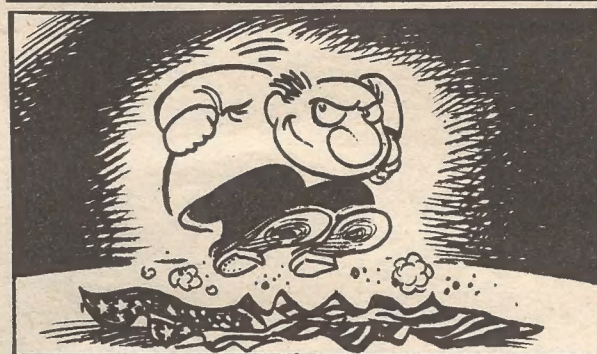
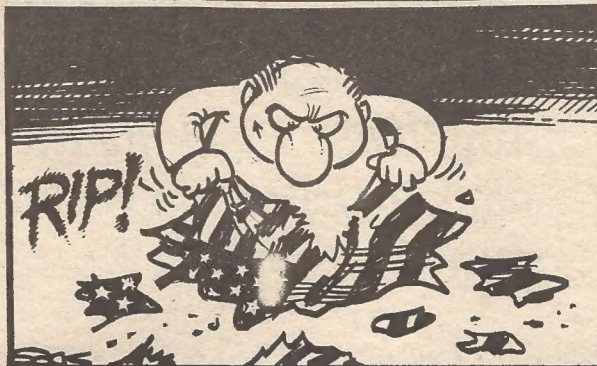
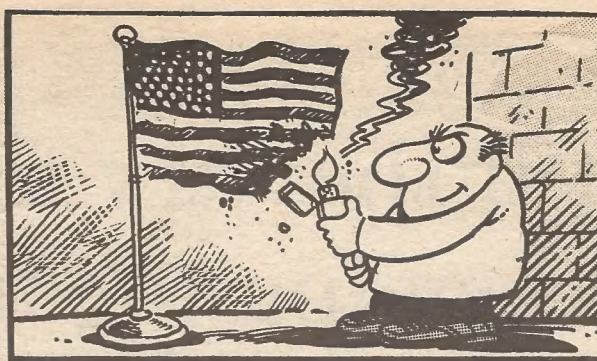
she neither knows nor cares
nor has a part of
nor has access to my world
or any adults access to
that world
where decisions are made
& society perpetuated

& i, post pubescent
& all
post pubescents don't
have to know don't have to
care don't have to & can't
have access to her world
unless it is to mold it in
some other way

this is oppression.

& diane & i post pubescent
with the strong defined features
& rougher skin & deeper voice
& breasts & blood & independence

turned & went inside. By Olivia Steile



BURN THE FLAG
READ THE BOOK
DROP YOUR MASK
AND TAKE A LOOK
SEE THE LAND
FEEL THE BREEZE
TAKE A STAND
GET OFF YOUR KNEES
TURN THE CORNER
TAKE A WALK
LET'S FIND A PLACE
WHERE WE CAN TALK
SEE MY FACE
HEAR MY VOICE
AND UNDERSTAND
YOU'VE GOT A CHOICE
BURN THE BOOK
FLY THE FLAG
PRAY TO GOD
AND KILL A FAG
CLASE YOUR EYES
AND HIDE YOUR FACE
THE WORLD IS GONE
WITHOUT A TRACE

A POEM ABOUT
HOPE, CHOICE AND
FRUSTRATION.
DEDICATED TO ALL
WHO WORK FOR A
BETTER WORLD

By Lou Bellissimo

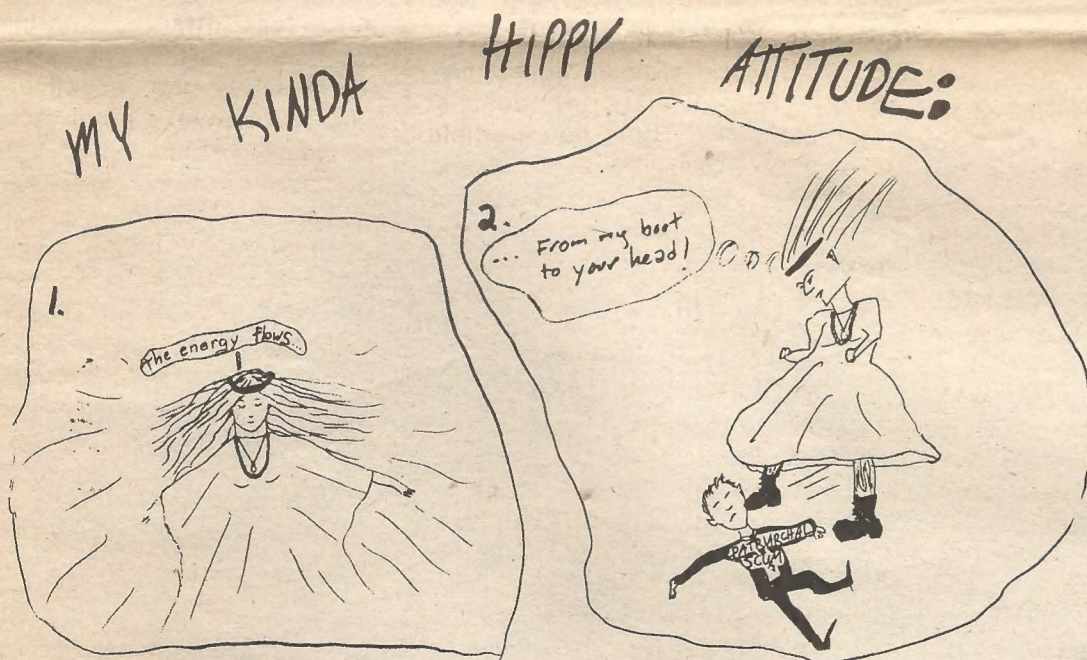
New Year's Day

Rotating desires mend trains in silk stockings
Her legs are like candycanes
Her face has the gaiety of sobriety
Wide fish awaiting a mouth
They walk on ice blocks with time
In borrowed shoes the band plays on,
And Kentucky slips into the hand of a pair of jacks,
The radio drinks bourbon and I exodus
to Palestine and liberation
Dancing with angelfish
And wrestling with a peacock
To then swim away to a lost bordello
And then to Newcastle

By Don Carter

The sky does not cover everything
I can get out from underneath the blanket,
And see into the new day.
In the new day,
Children won't have to cry
When Dad doesn't come home.
And Mom doesn't stay
When she should have went years ago.
And I will know that I am OK
And I will have the wisdom
To know it wasn't me.

By Don Carter



When my heart has sen the parade
of tired bodies marching,
coolly smiling in bright suits,
with television in their eyes;

When my ears are engulfed
in a world of screaming colors
that give nothing to see;

When all I hear speaks
of shallow satisfaction,
like a rapist's orgasm
or a slave's song;

And when all that we do,
belongs in someone's pocketbook,
and life's meaning is
that of the King,
buit made only for the King;

How can I dance,
like a young girl,
in the fields
of lillies and daffodils?

By Don Carter

The Eighties

Salesmen with empty hearts are
painted and paid to pretend
they are the dawn of a new age
of power and glory for Amerika.
But they take like a thief
and have stepped off the ladder
long, long ago while we weren't looking.
They say:
"Give me money, give me love
I want what everyone wants,
but why haven't I seen
the golden freedom?
Why haven't I found
the sweet golden love?"

By Don Carter

They came from between the cracks
in the float of my apartment
and asked me
how long I'd been awake
and if I was ready
to go see him.
"Who's that?" I asked
but they only pointed
To the hole in my head
and the holes
on the bottom of my socks.
That's who.

By Don Carter

State Control Through Hate

By Tizlano Fontanive

The "State" - meaning the very small percentage of the population who controls the majority of wealth and those who dictate our lives. To keep the status quo intact (of them on top) they must devise ways of controlling the population. A key tool in this is to manipulate the way people deal with others that are different (in sex, race, class, etc). It means separating and stereotyping people into easily defined groups; men and wimmyn, blacks and whites, straights and gays. These groups can then be manipulated, through various forms of propaganda, into perceiving any other as an enemy and not an ally. (divide and conquer)

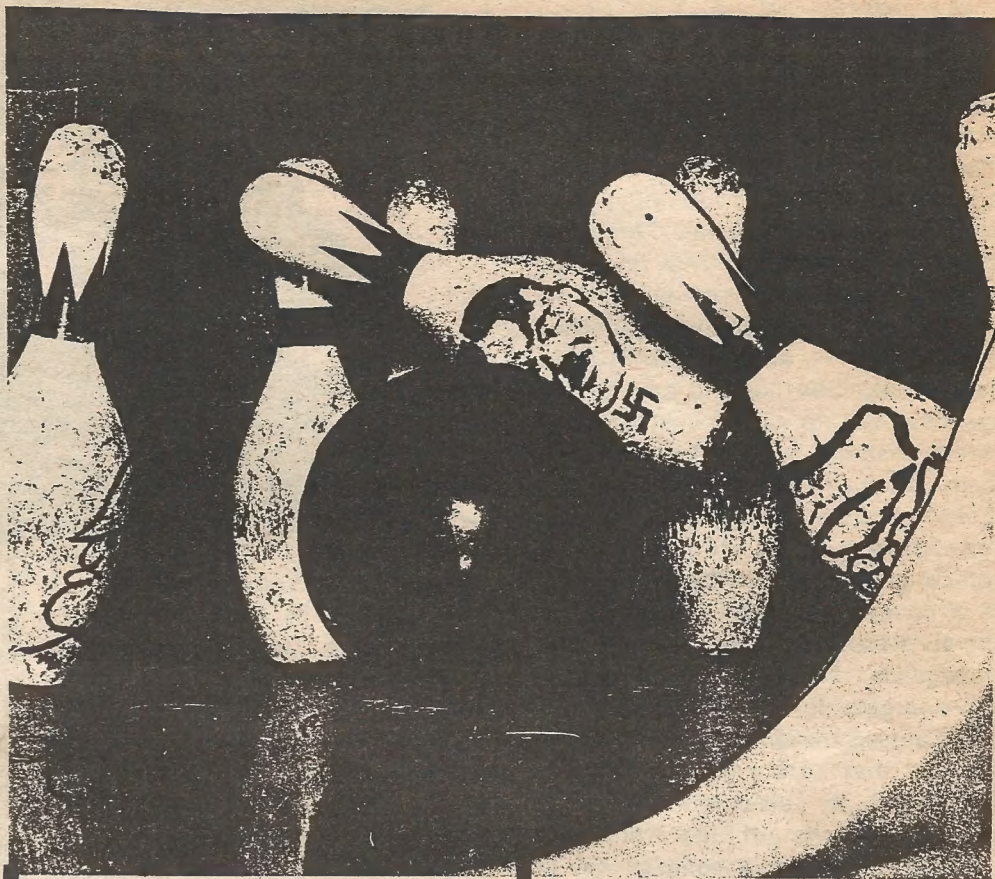
Sexism -To keep 50% of the population powerless. It also functions to destroy any non sexual and/or equalitarian relationships between wimmyn and men making cooperation on an equal level impossible.

Homophobia - To internally divide the two sexes. It limits bonds

and friendships within the same sex, especially among men. With the only acceptable relationship being certain state-sanctioned rituals - usually violence -- against wimmyn (gang rape and assaults) or against other men (some sports, gangs, and of course the military and war).

Racism - To direct blame for poverty away from the State and against the victims themselves. The majority of the poor underclass in this country is made up of people of color; blacks, hispanics and mexicans especially. The state must make the white majority believe that the poor are poor because of their own inadequacies and not because of a corrupt system. A survey of 2100 students at 41 different colleges showed that 45% believed that "some races were more evolved than others."

All three are vital to the continuation of the plutocracy in which we live. And all three must be destroyed before any truly free society can arise.



life, of corporate power, of personal relations--, but very little in the way of a revolutionary strategy to bring the recommended social changes about. This failure must be attributed to essentially reformist, pacifist and utopian approaches. There was a deep faith that through the construction of communities, of counter institutions, of a counter culture, the movement could whittle away the authoritarian power structure. So there was little effort to construct a movement that could go on the attack. Even explicitly revolutionary groupings with an anti-authoritarian perspective, such as the Situationist International, were unable to answer important real questions satisfactorily. Again there was a brilliant critique of existing society (particular of Leninist organizations) but no credible strategy for moving forward. Some anarchists turned to various turn of the century schools of anarchist thought. Their blindness to a changed world sometimes made the most dogmatic Leninists look like founts of critical insight by comparison.

Third, while large sectors of the population were in revolt, leadership of the movement fell to relatively privileged people: largely students and often loudmouthed middle class white men. The prosperity of the period fueled all sorts of middle class illusions about the world. Additionally the experience of various national liberation movements in the third world validated some authoritarian impulses. The idea that middle class students armed with "the correct line" should lead the oppressed masses to revolution via some vanguard party was very popular among middle class student radicals.

The turn towards Leninism seriously damaged the movements of that period. The internal life of the movements became uglier. The free-ranging critique of existing society was narrowed to fit the confines of Leninist ideology. Anti-democratic practices of quashing dissent within the movement were applied liberally. Personal, cultural

and sexual concerns were dismissed or subordinated to narrow conceptions of class or anti-imperialist struggle. A vital and vibrant cultural resistance was abandoned to corporate control. Important experiments in communes, co-ops and collectives were ridiculed. It was a bad scene.

Cont'd P.10

Cont. from P.5

that is by choice.

I understand from my experience, why women who have had abortions for the most part keep silent. But I think that it is important for people to break the silence, dispell the myth that somebody else has abortions. Reclaim and be proud of women's sexuality and secure the right to safe and legal abortions.

I was suprised that I didn't feel more comfortable sharing my experiences within the movement. Unfortunately the negative, false images of women are not excluded in the political community. It's not a safe place for women to be free. Not yet.

Although I told my very conservative parents my decision, they don't want any of my relatives or their friends to know. This too no doubt stems from the stigma of them being bad parents to have failed to raise a "good girl." But now I've realized that it is important for others to know, even if they are not pro-choice. Maybe those anti-choice acquaintances and relatives will rethink their positions when it hits so close to home. Or maybe they'll pray for my misguided soul or condemn me - it's still worth a try.

State or Revolution

By Ned Day

"Lenin is yours, the shipyard is ours" echoed through the streets of Gdansk, Poland as striking workers from the Lenin Shipyards protested government plans to close the shipyards, a center of worker's militancy. The Polish workers were expressing quite clearly where they stood: for workers control of industry and against the Communist state and its authoritarian ideology.

As more people in North America come to view themselves as revolutionaries, the questions of revolutionary theory will assert themselves in important ways. Theoretical questions often seem arcane and irrelevant. But as we face dramatic changes in the world around us such questions can take on great importance. How do we respond to state repression without imposing the logic of the state on the lives of our organizations? How do we build coalitions and alliances in a principled way? What is the role of revolutionaries when they are a minority? How does the international struggle against capital relate to struggles for national liberation? How do we construct both a human community and a fighting movement that can win? How do we respond to setbacks? Questions that seem abstract can become very concrete very quickly. Which do we get, Lenin or the shipyards?

Revolution Betrayed

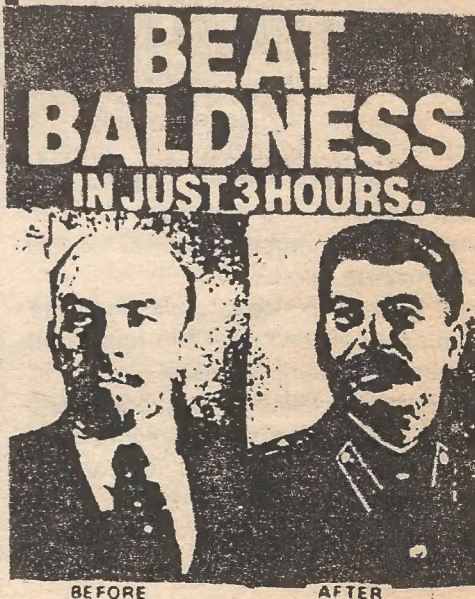
In the late 1960's there were massive social upheavals that led many people to consider themselves revolutionaries. These people were

immediately confronted with all of the difficult questions above and many more. While the general revolt that was shaking society had a very anti-authoritarian character, the period did not see the emergence of a strong revolutionary anarchist movement. Instead, thousands of sincere people were attracted to a range of authoritarian ideologies that we call Leninism. Before discussing the strengths and defects of Leninism it is important to understand why it came to dominate the thinking of revolutionaries.

What Is To Be Undone

First, Leninism had answers to people's questions. It was possible to adopt some variety of Leninist ideology and have a quick answer to problems you needed a quick answer for. With the historical experiences of the Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Vietmanese revolutions you could justify any number of positions on various important problems. This is not to say that Leninism simply reduced organizers to robots who would spit back appropriate quotes from the various big guys (Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Mao, Che, Ho etc...). It also provided a framework, a common language, in which ideas could be elaborated. This created at least the appearance of relative coherence in contrast to the dizzying chaos of new left theories.

Second, there was a failure in anti-authoritarian theory. Much of "anarchist" thought during that time was frankly reformist. There was a very strong body of anarchist social criticism--of the schools, of urban



Revolutionary anarchists have an obligation to prevent the repetition of this mistake. This means several things. We need to understand the appeal of Leninist ideology, why sincere revolutionaries embrace authoritarian ideas. The important questions that Leninism answers for people need to be seriously attacked from an anti-authoritarian perspective. We need to analyse the systems we are up against and the means that will be necessary to bring them down. Revolutionary anarchist theory must move beyond the repetition of slogans and self-congratulation to the articulation of a coherent strategy for libertarian social discussion, self-criticism and propaganda. Finally we need to devote our energies to the construction of self-managed movements of oppressed people that are able to resist domination by articulate "leaders" from the ranks of the relatively privileged. This is a complex set of tasks. It is much more than repeating the strong anarchist critique of Leninism. It also includes self-critically understanding how the anarchist movement is dominated by informal leaders, generally drawn from the same places as the Leninists. What are the theoretical positions dominant within the anarchist movement that stand in the way of challenging this informal leadership?

Combat Leninism!

As revolts rock the Soviet Bloc and other "socialist" countries, Leninism may seem like a thing of the past. But the reasons for its influence amongst revolutionary-minded people have not evaporated. Like any ideology, Leninism may be rotten, but it will not fall unless you kick it.

A Look at Leninism by Ron Taber is an important contribution to the tasks that confront revolutionary anarchists. Taber is a leading member of a small formerly Leninist grouping called the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). This short book is a collection of a series of articles that appeared in the RSL's newspaper, *Torch/La Antorcha*. Taber tackles the problems of Leninism from the perspective of someone who was immersed in a Leninist perspective. He deals honestly with the qualities that attracted him and his comrades to Leninism. He doesn't try to excuse himself. Rather he seeks out the essential elements of Leninism that have made the so-called socialist countries the oppressive, authoritarian societies that they are. Further, he confronts what this means for revolutionaries facing the future. This book should be read by anyone who is seriously investigating the problems of revolutionary theory. Those who are flirting with various Leninist groups, as well as committed revolutionary anarchists would benefit from reading this book.

Taber explains in understandable language many of the important aspects of Leninist ideology. He compares its claims to its practice and results. He writes in a personal style that makes clear his own relationship to the ideas he is criticising.

State or Revolution

Leninism is the ideology of the Bolshevik (later Communist) Party that dominated the Russian revolution. Lenin was a brilliant tactician and



strategist. Taber looks at how the Bolsheviks conceived of a revolution in Russia prior to its actual outbreak in 1917. Like all Marxists, the Bolsheviks believed that societies must pass through a particular progression and that Russia needed a capitalist or bourgeois revolution. When the Russian workers and peasants pushed past this conception, it was the Bolsheviks who were able to ride their revolt to power. While the Bolsheviks claimed to be leading a workers' revolution, Taber demonstrates how they were in fact directing a workers' and peasants' revolution towards the establishment of a new type of capitalism, state capitalism, with the Communist Party as the new ruling class. With the same determination they devoted to overthrowing the old order, the Bolsheviks crushed the revolutionary movement in Russia. They turned the autonomous organs of workers', peasants' and soldiers' self-rule, the councils or soviets, into appendages of the Communist Party bureaucracy.

It is important here to understand how this fact influenced the development of the revolutionary movement around the world. With the power of the Russian state apparatus at its disposal the new rulers were able to dominate the organization of revolutionaries around the world and direct them in their own class interests. In the imperialist countries of Western Europe the Communist parties generally abandoned any interest in workers revolution and sought power within the trade unions and served the foreign policy interests of Moscow. One such interest was to maintain control of the revolutionary movement. Such control might be jeopardized by a successful major revolution in Europe. Therefore the anarchist social revolution in Spain was crushed by the Communists in alliance with the liberal Spanish middle class. The German Communists were ordered to engage in sectarian politics that ultimately sacrificed millions of people to the Nazis under the notorious slogan "After Hitler, Us!"

In the colonized countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, Leninism fulfilled a different role. It became the dominant ideology of various national liberation movements imperialist domination. Leninism validated the process by which an educated and relatively (to their own people, not necessarily to the people of the imperialist countries) privileged minority would lead largely peasant populations in revolts that would establish this minority as a new national ruling class.

Taber discusses the role of what he calls the "Bolshevik ethos." He explains how the conditions of organizing a clandestine and disciplined revolutionary party reinforced amongst the Bolsheviks authoritarian

relations that people bring with them from society in general within the revolutionary movement. In particular patriarchal patterns of male power (Based often on a facility at polemical "discussion") and a very narrow view of human sexuality (homosexuality and abortion were legalized in the first days of the revolution and outlawed later by the Bolsheviks) dominated Bolshevik nations of "discipline." With the power of the state in their hands these hard-guy values and equally authoritarian attitudes towards art and culture were imposed on nations of millions of people.

In an important discussion of some anti-authoritarian tendencies that appear in some of Lenin's writings (particularly *State and Revolution*) Taber shows how the authoritarian core remains intact within Leninist ideology.

Leninist Ideology: A Geriatric Disorder

Finally, in a two chapter discussion of Lenin's theory of knowledge, Taber exposes the fundamentally authoritarian nature of the philosophical outlook of Leninism as it is rooted in particular positions of Marxism. While the most abstract, this is the most important part of the book. Taber shows how Leninism inherits some of the most mechanistic views of 19th century scientific thought. In particular he discusses how unredeemably dogmatic Lenin was in his attitude towards a "science of revolution". A belief in "Laws" of history and social development and the idea that history is progressive, that it moves inexorably towards the establishment of a classless, stateless society through a series of stages is essential to Leninist ideology. With the certainty of "science" Leninism comes to view human beings and their personal desires and aspirations not and ends in themselves but as "social forces" that function within the unfolding of history.

What is it that distinguishes Leninist ideology from genuinely liberatory revolutionary theory? The distinction between theory and ideology is a distinction between different ways of relating with ideas. Theory is when you have ideas. Ideology is when ideas have you. Leninism claims to be a science. It says the stateless, classless society is the inevitable result of the unfolding of history. It is not the fought for and conscious creation of human needs and desires. But revolutionary theory occurs, not just because of a contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production, but because people imagine, desire and fight for a better life.

The needs, desires and aspirations of living beings is the

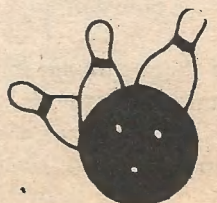
starting point for revolutionary anarchist theory. These motivations are not expressed as objective laws of history but as moral, aesthetic and spiritual values of people here and now. We fight because we love the world and hate this system and we can imagine a better way.

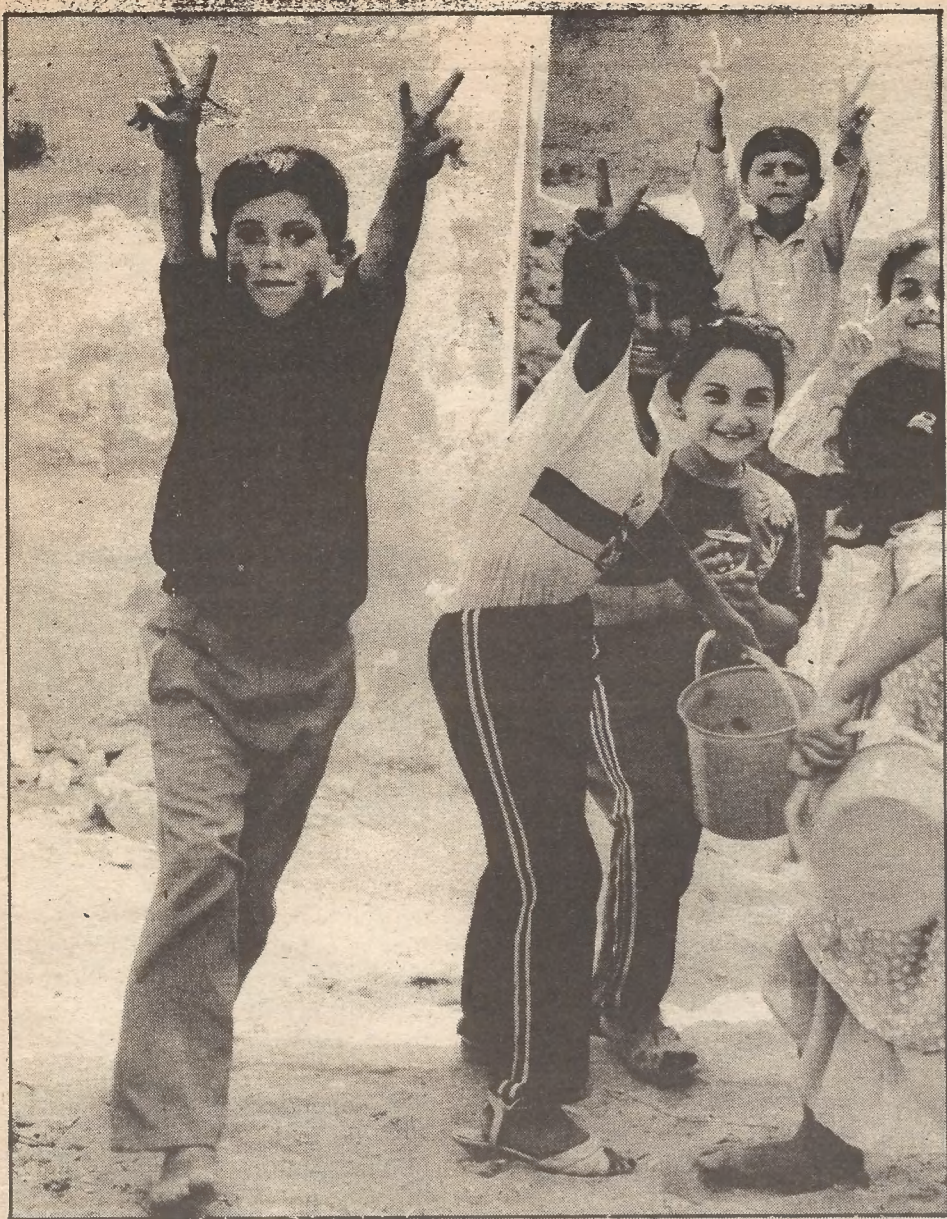
By making human desires subservient to abstract historical laws Leninism recapitulates the alienation that is the foundation for capitalist society. The alienation of the worker from the world she creates through her labor also includes the world of ideas. If the oppressed are not fighting for themselves they are fighting for someone else. Under Leninism that someone else is the party bureaucrat or guerrilla commander. In this way Leninism is just one of the many ways that capitalism recuperates the revolt of those it keeps down. Leninism places the legitimate revolt of oppressed people in the service of certain sections of capital. This does not mean that real people don't win real gains. But it does mean that those gains are subordinate to the interests of at least a section of capital. It is fairly easy to demonstrate how this is true under national liberation regimes. It is also true in trade unions where Communists obtain power within capital by keeping workers disciplined.

Theory and ideology are not just neat little compartments where we can toss various bodies of ideas. Rather they are different ways of relating to sometimes the same ideas. The ideological supermarket, like all supermarkets, is fit only for looting. This doesn't mean that we have nothing to learn from Leninism (or Islam or Acupuncture of the Rosicrucians). To the contrary, Leninists are people with real experiences and observations about the world and we should learn what we can from them.

Leninism in its various forms has dominated the theoretical concerns of the revolutionary movement since the Russian revolution. In this context intelligent and insightful people have sought to analyze the world, often subordinating their critical judgement to the demands of ideology. Revolutionary anarchists can obtain useful insights from critical reading of Leninist theory because it addresses itself to some of the same questions that concern us. So too we should read the *Wall Street Journal*, rich with the insights into the functioning of capitalism. But we must always make clear where we stand. Lenin and the *Wall Street Journal* is theirs, the world is ours.

Leninism is the ideology of aerial bombardment in Afghanistan, riot control in Tibet and strike suppression in Poland. In all of these places people are fighting for their lives, too often under the banners of equally repellant ideologies. As in El Salvador, so too Afghanistan, we stand in solidarity with people fighting back, in spite of their ideology. Revolutionary anarchists are on the side of the oppressed, not the oppressor, without apologies, everywhere.





acknowledged as a cultural resistance. Rhymes and songs are passed on for decades that remind successive generations of kids that they are not alone, that they have a common enemy and that express a surprisingly clear vision of what should be done. Jokes and riddles hold grown ups up to the ridicule that children must swallow daily.

The song quoted above should be treated seriously. Children know who is really cruel and arbitrary. They also know what they want to do to the grown ups who abuse them. These desires may or may not be conscious or articulated outside of the songs, rhymes and riddles that are memorized by almost all children. Certainly these expressions mean different things to different kids, but their general content is unmistakably insurgent.

The main target of children's resistance is the school. It can be active or passive. Skipping class is a way to reclaim portions of your day that are stolen from you. Homework goes undone, is turned in late or is copied. "Cheating" rejects the claim of the school to determine our fate by its arbitrary standards.

Free the Sibley 4!

The trashing of Sibley High School earlier this year by four teenagers was a heroic act of resistance to the domination of school and the adult world at large. The extensive damage to the school cost the system big bucks. It also closed the school for the school year. The capitalist press kept saying that the Sibley 4 had no reason for their actions while publishing at the same time quotes that clearly stated that the kids hated school. Nobody wonders why prisoners would tear down a prison. Why act so befuddled when kids tear up their school?

The case of the Sibley 4 is a textbook illustration of how the system deals with resistance by

children and youth. First it denies that the resistance is motivated by the conditions of real peoples lives: High Schools are like prisons. Then the resistance is criminalized, its political nature so completely denied that the kids themselves don't even assert it. A distinct group of juvenile delinquents is demarcated by the authorities. They are systematically isolated and punished as an example to the whole student population. The Sibley 4, street gangs and others are held up as justification for the wholesale suspension of what few rights a student might tenuously claim to have. There is usually nothing remarkable about the "crimes" involved. Drug use, vandalism and skipping school are common to the whole student body. Rather it is the frequency, the scope or, more importantly, the open nature of the defiance that brings the wrath of the authorities down on students. The pattern of criminalizing resistance activity reappears in the experience of all oppressed people.

On the Streets

As youth become more able to assert themselves, to travel the streets and choose their own activity, school loses the total control it exercises over younger children. At this point the police appear. Through "statutory laws" such as curfews, age of consent and other age limits, the state empowers the police to control youth. This process is essential to all future police activity. If the police are able to strike sufficient fear into a kid they will probably never have to worry about her until she dies. She will be cowed when they appear to break a strike or "resolve" a domestic dispute. So police are particularly vicious in their treatment of youth. They harass any gathering of kids, particularly kids of color, or kids who identify with some form of cultural resistance (hip hop, punk, etc...). They drag kids down to the river or the railroad tracks for brutal beatings. The juvenile injustice

system is committed to teaching kids that they have no rights and that they can only rely on the mercy of their oppressors if they wish to alleviate their suffering.

Oppression and Exploitation

It would be mistaken to reduce the oppression of children and youth to its economic function within class society. But the relationship between children's oppression and capitalist exploitation is real and important to understanding some of the contours of the child's experience.

The exploitation of children takes a number of forms. In many societies it is quite straightforward: Children are worked hard at low wages or no wages. In over-industrialized countries like the U.S. the exploitation is usually not as direct. The social system in the U.S. demands a much more thorough control of its workers. To achieve this control, extensive mass schooling becomes necessary. This schooling occurs side by side with the educational preparation for certain complex tasks demanded in our economy. Because schooling is socially necessary for maximum capitalist exploitation, the activity of children within the school must be seen as part of the labor process. Because it is unwaged it must be understood as super-exploitation. But the exploitation of children can not be seen simply in terms of their future exploitation as wage-workers (or as unwaged workers).

Children fulfill certain functions within capitalism as children. At the crudest level, a kid is the physical and emotional punching bag of every grown up who might otherwise take out his frustration on the system instead. On another level, the child serves as a contact point with our own humanity after we feel drained of that humanity by life in this society. The child can give us good feelings and experiences that nurture us when little else does. While capitalism demands that we be emotionally and spiritually stunted, it can not kill us and still exploit us. It needs to allow some of our human spark to burn if it is to tap our creative/productive potential for profit. It is at this point that children can contribute the most to the subversion of this society. It is the tiny ember of life in us that is a raging flame in a child. That flame, that natural love, that curiosity and playfulness is what must eventually set the world on fire.

Why Children's Liberation is Critical

The fight for children's liberation is the fight for the liberation of all humanity. We need to understand how our experiences as children, and our failure to describe them as oppression, twists our vision of a better world in ways that only guarantee the continuation of unnecessary human misery. The crushing of a child gives us the kind of grown up who can fight for the liberation of the oppressed one moment, and apologize for "socialist" nuclear weapons, massacres and concentration camps the next. It gives us "pacifist" men who beat their wives.

There will inevitably be "progressives" who will dismiss the oppression of billions of people as secondary or as a peculiar fetish of the anti-authoritarian fringe. But

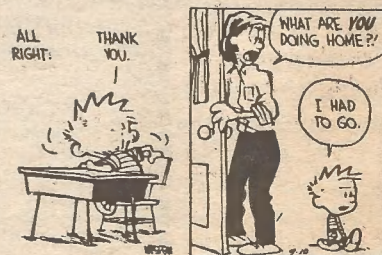
these people, too, were once children and carry the same sort of scars as the rest of us. They will insist that their own personal stories are irrelevant, that what is important is the struggle of the *truly* oppressed. But as long as we repress the stories of our own experiences how can we foster the kind of honest communication that is essential to any meaningful solidarity amongst the oppressed. Were you beaten, spanked, humiliated, molested? If we don't speak up, if we don't speak up, our pasts will haunt any attempt to create a human future. The silence we all maintain about our own experiences muffles the screams of today's children. Only when we break the silence on our own experiences can we begin the process that will reveal what children's liberation will look like.

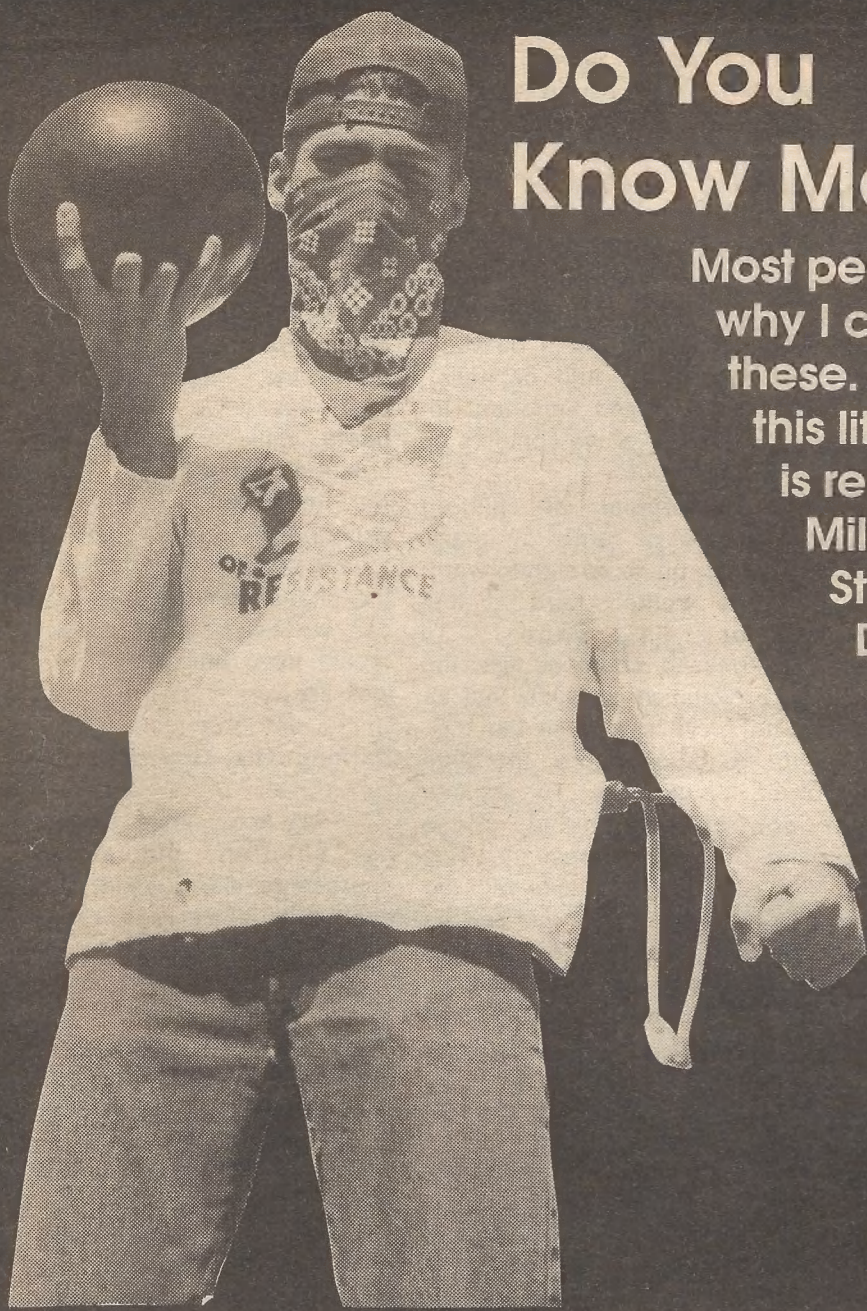
Naming the Oppressor

We experience our oppression as children individually. Our oppressors are distinct individuals, each with their own story. These stories are important, but often they serve to obscure the systemic nature of our oppression. Before we can intelligently act to smash such a powerful system we must understand it thoroughly. How does it reproduce itself from generation to generation? We must understand how it reinforces and is reinforced by other systems of oppression. What are its weak points? But even before we can know these things we must name the system. We must name the oppressor.

Gerontocracy means "rule by the old." The gerontocracy is the system where the lives of the young are dominated and controlled by their elders. It is the system that allows a handful of old men to hold an entire planet hostage to their insane schemes for power. The gerontocracy can be understood narrowly as the ruling class in its relation to age based oppression. Or it can be understood broadly as "the grown ups": parents, teachers, principals, cops, priests, social workers, movement "heavies", etc...

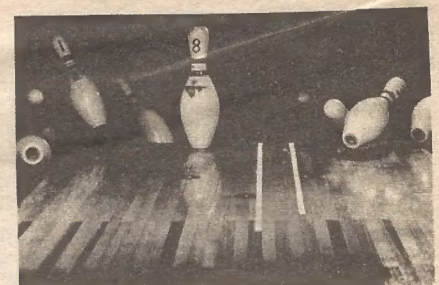
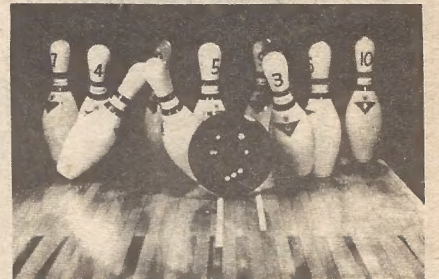
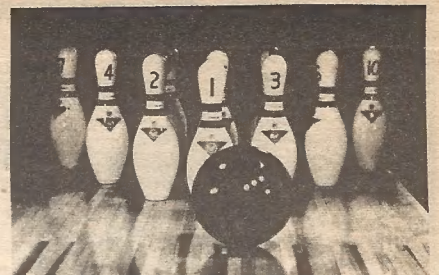
This article is intended only as a starting point for much more discussion. I have deliberately chosen not to answer certain easily anticipated objections ("what about ageism against the elderly", "you romanticize children's bad behavior" and so on.) The systematic oppression of children by a gerontocratic social system is undeniable. The real questions that face us are "what is the nature of that system?" and "what can we do to smash it?"





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